



CENTER FOR EARTH LEADERSHIP FACT SHEETS

Using Eco-Friendly Cleaners

Look under the kitchen and bathroom sinks, and you're likely to find an array of cleaning products, each one "guaranteed" to make some cleaning chore easier.

None of us would consciously risk our health or wildlife just to keep our home spotless. Yet, we do so when we fill our shelves with disinfectants, polishes, stain removers, and toilet, drain, and oven cleaners. Damage can result from their production, use, or disposal.

Not only are these products hazardous, but most are not needed. For example, Consumer Reports found that plain water was more effective than half the commercial glass cleaners on the market.

Most household cleaning needs can be met with five simple ingredients: liquid soap, borax, vinegar, baking soda, and vegetable oil. Use these to create your own "miracle" cleaning formulas.

MIRACLE CLEANING FORMULAS

- **ALL-PURPOSE CLEANER**

1 quart warm water, 1 teaspoon liquid soap, 1 teaspoon borax and 1 teaspoon vinegar. This solution will clean most surfaces including countertops, floors, walls, rugs, and upholstery. Keep it in a spray bottle for ready use on small jobs.

- **TOILET BOWL**

Scrub with a toilet bowl brush. For more thorough cleaning, empty the water in the bowl by pouring a bucket of water into it, sprinkle baking soda on a wet rag or sponge, and scrub the bowl inside and out. According to the Washington Toxics Coalition, using disinfectants serves no useful purpose.

- **TUB, SINK AND TILE**

Sprinkle baking soda on a wet rag and rub. Rinse well to avoid leaving a hazy film. If a stronger cleaner is needed, use borax in the same way.



- **GLASS**

Use a spray bottle and solution of 2 tablespoons vinegar to 1 quart water. Wipe dry with old newspapers to avoid leaving lint on the glass.

- **FLOORS**

For vinyl floors damp mop with a solution of 2 tablespoons vinegar to 1 quart water. For wood floors, use 1 tablespoon liquid soap to 1 quart water.

- **DRAINS**
Prevent problems by not letting grease or hair go down a drain. If a drain becomes clogged, use a plunger. Or pour in one-quarter cup baking soda, followed by one-half cup vinegar, and let them fizz for a few minutes. Flush with boiling water. This combination should break down any fatty deposits. If something else is clogging the drain, use a mechanical snake, available at most hardware stores, or rent a water ram or power snake.
- **OVEN**
Avoid spills by placing a metal tray underneath baking dishes. If that fails, sprinkle baking soda on spills when they are warm; scrub off when cool. Periodically clean surfaces with moistened baking powder and a nylon scouring pad.
- **MOLD AND MILDEW**
Prevention is the best solution. Keep shower area dry by using the fan and by wiping moisture off the tile. If mildew still appears, scrub with baking soda or borax.
- **WOOD FURNITURE**
On unvarnished wood use a natural oil such as linseed. Let soak into the wood an hour or so and remove excess oil with a soft cloth. Varnished surfaces don't need to be oiled. Clean with a damp cloth and rub dry.